

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 1802

FOR NEA/ARN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP
SUBJECT: CODEL VISITS

REF: (A) STATE 215357 (B) BAGHDAD 1749

1. A DISCUSSION WITH ZAHAWI ON AUGUST 26 COVERING A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A LOW-KEY QUESTION ON THE CODEL SIKES VISIT. I ASKED HIM IF HE COULD TELL ME WHAT HAD GONE WRONG, AND WHY THE MEETINGS HAD EVAPORATED AT THE LAST MINUTE. ZAHAWI ANSWERED WITH CANDOR THAT THE GOI HAD JUST BEEN CAUGHT SHORT, NOTHING LMOGE.

2. HE SAID THAT ACTING FON MIN ALWAN HAD MISREAD THE MEMO ON THE SUBJECT (THAT HAD GONE FORWARD IN ZAHAWI'S ABSENCE), HAD ASSUMED THE CODEL WAS DUE NEXT MONTH, AND HAD PUT IT ASIDE FOR FON MIN HAMMADI'S ATTENTION. ZAHAWI RETURNED FROM LEAVE WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMPENDING VISIT UNTIL MY TELEPHONE CALL THE DAY BEFORE IT TOOK PLACE. IT WAS TOO LATE TO GET THE NECESSARY CLEARANCES - AND WE KNOW THE REST.

3. THIS IS ESSENTIALLY WHAT WE HAD BEEN TOLD, AND DEDUCED, AT THE TIME (REF B). ZAHAWI WAS QUITE CONFIDENTIAL

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OPEN IN EXPLAINING THAT A CONGRESSIONAL VISIT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT THE MFA DEALS WITH ON A DAILY BASIS, AND IT REQUIRES A LITTLE EXTRA TIME AND ATTENTION TO SET IT UP AND ENSURE EVERYTHING GOES WELL. THIS WAS AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THE ISSUE OF POSSIBLE FUTURE VISITS, AND I DID SO.

4. ZAHAWI SAID THAT IN PRINCIPLE THE GOI WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER RECEIVING SPECIFIC CODELS, BEARING IN MIND TWO CRITICAL FACTORS: WHO AND WHEN. THE MFA WOULD WANT TO KNOW FAR IN ADVANCE OF ANY PROPOSED VISIT, AND KNOW EXACTLY WHO WAS INVOLVED. CAREFUL CONSIDERATION WOULD HAVE TO BE GIVEN TO THE LATTER POINT BEFORE AN ANSWER COULD BE PROVIDED AS TO WHETHER OR NOT MEETINGS WOULD BE ARRANGED. (ZAHAWI WAS EVIDENTLY DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN TOURISTIC VISITS TO IRAQ BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, TO WHICH THE GOI APPARENTLY HAS NO OBJECTION, AND VISITS INVOLVING CONTACTS WITH IRAQI OFFICIALS, WHICH ARE A DIFFERENT MATTER.)

5. HE ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE TENDENCY OF OTHERS TO ATTACH EXCESSIVE SIGNIFICANCE TO MUNDANE EVENTS IN IRAQ INVOLVING THE U.S. WOULD MAKE SUCH MATTERS AS NUMBER AND FREQUENCY PLAN A ROLE IN DECISIONS CONCERNING RECEIVING CODELS. (HE NOTED IN PASSING THAT J.P. SMITH'S POST ARTICLES HAD MADE THE PAINTING OF USINT AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE.) IN SUM, HE GAVE A CLEAR MESSAGE THAT THE GOI IS WILLING TO BE APPROACHED ON THE SUBJECT, BUT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO BE FLATLY NEGATIVE.

6. COMMENT: OUR INTERESTS IN PROMOTING A DIALOGUE WITH IRAQ, AND INCREASING UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S CONFIDENTIAL

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POSITION ON ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN WOULD BE SERVED BY SUCCESSFUL CONGRESSIONAL VISITS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE VISITS ARE TURNED DOWN OR DO NOT WORK OUT AS PLANNED, FOR WHATEVER REASON, THE END RESULT WILL PROBABLY NOT BE BENEFICIAL. USINT IS READY TO FOLLOW UP WITH WHATEVER THE DEPT PROPOSES, BUT ASKS THAT ALL OF ZAHAWI'S RESERVATIONS BE BORNE CAREFULLY IN MIND.
PECK

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